

2015

Religious Tourism Product Bundling an Innovative Approach to Destination Marketing and Visitor Experience Management: The case of Early Christian Sites in the East of Ireland


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Recommended Citation

Enongene, V. & Griffin, K. (2015). Religious Tourism Product Bundling an Innovative Approach to Destination Marketing and Visitor Experience Management: The case of Early Christian Sites in the East of Ireland, *Global Management Perspectives*, International Annual Conference, Novara, Italy, 21-24th of October

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Religious Tourism Product Bundling an Innovative Approach to Destination Marketing and Visitor Experience Management: The case of Early Christian Sites in the East of Ireland

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Global Management Perspectives, Novara, Italy, 21-24th of October

Introduction & Background

Destination Marketing

```
graph TD; DM[Destination Marketing] --> DMO[DMO  
Destination Marketing Organisations]; DMO --> PPTC([Promoting Places  
Towns or Cities]); DMO --> BD([Branding Destinations]); DMO --> C[Communicating with Potential visitors  
Influencing their preferences,  
intention to travel & Final destination]; DMO --> PDD[Promoting Developments & Marketing of Destinations]; C --> IVNEB([Increase in Visitor Numbers  
& Economic Benefit]);
```

The diagram illustrates the Destination Marketing process. It begins with 'Destination Marketing' at the top, which leads to 'DMO' (Destination Marketing Organisations). From 'DMO', the process branches into four parallel activities: 'Promoting Places Towns or Cities', 'Branding Destinations', 'Communicating with Potential visitors Influencing their preferences, intention to travel & Final destination', and 'Promoting Developments & Marketing of Destinations'. The 'Communicating...' activity leads to the final outcome: 'Increase in Visitor Numbers & Economic Benefit'.

DMO

Destination Marketing Organisations

Promoting Developments
&
Marketing of Destinations

Promoting Places
Towns or Cities

Branding Destinations

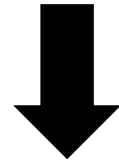
Communicating with Potential visitors
Influencing their preferences,
intention to travel & Final destination

Increase in Visitor Numbers
&
Economic Benefit

How Innovative Is the Approach?

Niche Innovation

Combining Existing Products in New ways to Cater to the Needs and Expectations of Visitors



Religious Tourism Products & Other Cultural
&
Heritage Products in Destination Marketing

Destinations that Successfully Market themselves as Religious Tourism Destinations

- ❖ Saudi Arabia
- ❖ Israel
- ❖ Italy **(some what)**

Yet !!!

**There are Enormous Benefits that could be Accrued
from Utilising Sacred Resources as Destination
Marketing Tools the World Over
&
in Ireland in particular**

Because!!!!

An increasing Number of People from all age Groups, Nationality, Gender, visiting sacred sites

It is apparent that sacred sites now play a different role for today's generation than they did in previous generations **(Bond, 2013)**

Grabbing the Benefits of Religious Tourism will be easier by adopting a marketing perspective **(Kartal, Tepeci, & Atli,2015)**

Importance of Utilising Religious Tourism as a Marketing Tool

Religious Tourism Seems to be the Trend projected increase in Visitor Numbers To Sacred Sites (UNWTO, 2014, Tourism & More, 2014)

Travel Irrespective of the Economic Climate (UNWTO, 2014, Tourism & More, 2014)

However in Ireland!!!

Very **Little Effort** has gone into **Promoting** Ireland as a **Religious Tourism** Destination

Do you think Religious
Sites are taken seriously ?

Lack of Interest in Showcasing/ Promoting
Ireland's Ecclesiastical / Religious Wealth

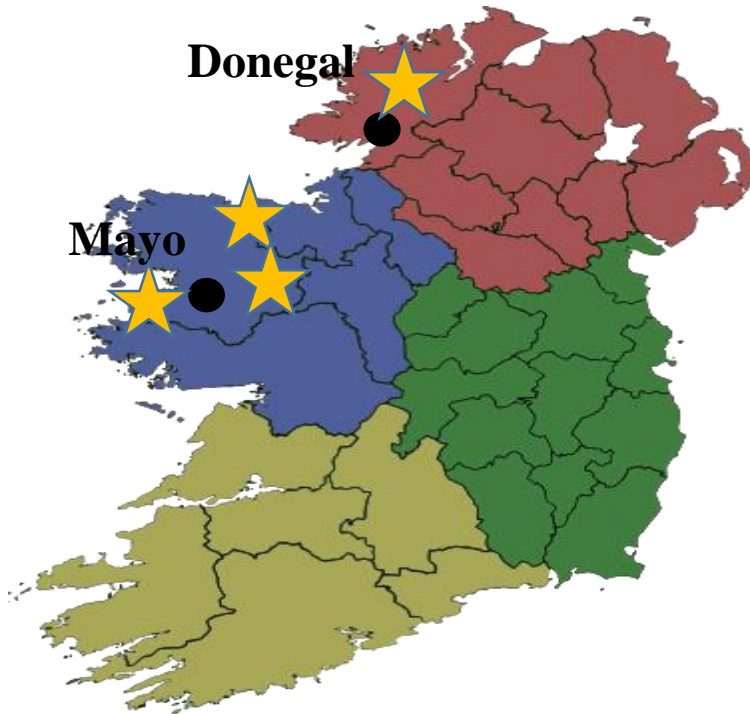
Failte Ireland Visitor Attraction Survey, 2012

Sacred Site	County	Region	Annual Visitor No.	Year
Knock Shrine Pilgrimage Centre	Co. Mayo	Ireland West	1.600.00	2012
Croagh Patrick	Co. Mayo	Ireland West	220.000	2012
Ballintubber	Co. Mayo	Ireland West	35.000	2012
Lough Derg	Co. Donegal	North West	20.000	2012

Source: **Failte Ireland Visitor Attraction Survey, 2012**

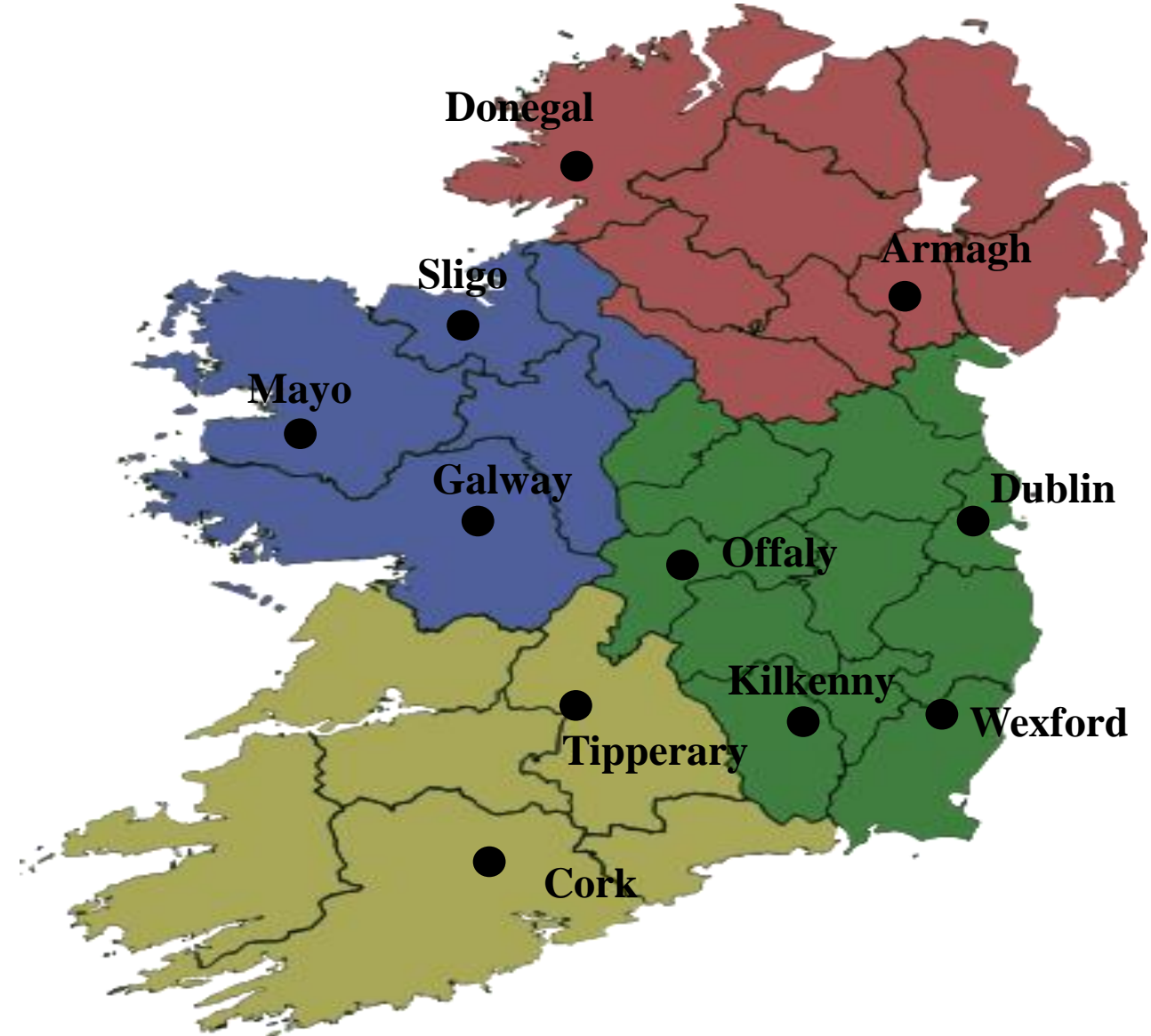
Geographical Representation of Sacred Sites

Failte Statistics, 2012



There are **2.470** Ecclesiastical Sites
Griffin, Gorman, Stacey, & O'Halloran (2008)

Study's Findings



Evidence of **Growing Awareness** of the **Importance** of
Religious Heritages as **Strategic Tools** in **Branding**
Ireland as a Destination

Objective of the Study

To highlight the importance of utilising religious tourism resources as strategic tools in destination marketing

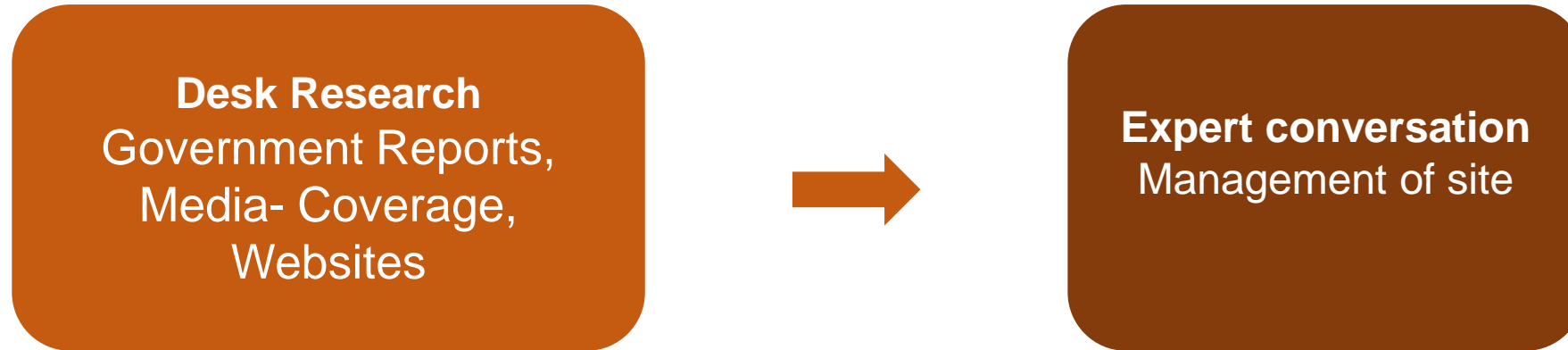
To highlight the potential economic benefits of utilising religious tourism resources as part of a strategic marketing tool

To advocate the use of these religious heritages as tools in strategic destination marketing (**future strategies**)

To provide evidence of the potential use of religious heritages as strategic marketing tools in marketing Ireland as a destination

Essential in that

Mixed-Methods



Findings

Themes for Brand “Ancient East”

Development of
Quality Visitor
Experience

4 Distinct Thematic Pillars

Ancient Irish History



Early Christian Ireland



Anglo, Ireland



Medieval Ireland

Showcasing the variety and diversity in the area

Ireland Ancient East Tourism Project

- ❖ Umbrella **Brand Offering** Visitors a compelling Motivation to visit the East of Ireland
- ❖ Discovery of **5000 years** of Europe's History
- ❖ **Making use of Religious Heritages** as part of the destination marketing strategy (Monasteries, Castles, Fortresses, Stone Age Art)
- ❖ Touring Region as opposed to a Route

Clonmacnoise



St Canice's Cathedral



Holy Cross Abbey



Glendalough Monastery



Mellifont Abbey



Jerpoint Abbey



Findings

To date, religious and pilgrimage heritage sites have been considered as fundamental gateways to success and economic recovery

They form an integral part of innovative destination marketing and visitor experience management strategies

Sacred sites are an invaluable tool in marketing Ireland as a destination internationally, and are a potential resource in enhancing the visitor experience, through the provision of personal experiences

It is also thought that such sites should be useful in attracting new market segments through online marketing and extensive use of media platforms.

Religious & Pilgrimage as a Potential Destination Marketing Tool for Ireland

- ❖ Its plethora of sacred sites **(2.470)** stories to experience for religiously motivated tourists **(Griffin et al., 2008)**
- ❖ Huge religious tourism market segment (e.g. American mkt segment)
- ❖ Religious events **(Reek Sunday Croagh Patrick & Knock Shrine, Monasteries, Cathedrals, Festivals)**

Marketing Ireland as a Religious Tourism Destination

- ❖ Use of media platforms local news papers, internet, YouTube videos, mobile apps enables cost-effective marketing communication etc, used by ancient east
- ❖ Religious tourism marketing has many benefits (increase tourism revenue by attracting new & high income tourists & Diversifying the sources of tourism revenue
- ❖ Increases both individual spending on tourism & Duration of stay during religious trips
- ❖ Alleviates seasonality problems in Tourism by attracting faith tourist all year round.
- ❖ Brings in new points of attraction to a country's tourism
- ❖ Helps local economies develop and contribute to sustainable development
- ❖ Religious tourism has enormous potential for marketing Ireland internationally if properly utilised

Implications for the study

The study has implications for **all religious tourism destinations** where there is a **need** to understand the **role** these resources **play** in **marketing** and **enhancing** the visitor experience.

Acknowledgement





Any Questions
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